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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, June 25, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE MUCH MISUNDERSTOOD POTATO." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

If you had set before you on a table 1 big juicy apple, 1 large orange, a medium sized baking powder biscuit, and 1 medium sized baked potato, which would you pick out as being the most fattening? I've a hunch most of you would consider the potato the chief weight producer.

Actually it is NOT. All four - the big apple, the big orange, the baking powder biscuit, and the medium sized potato - are equally fattening. I suppose the reason so many people have come to think of the potato as exceptionally fattening is that they know it is listed among the starchy foods. And they know that starch is a high calorie food.

They don't stop to think that a potato is more than three-fourths water! Only a tenth to a fifth of it is starch. And its importance in the diet is largely because of its minerals and vitamins. Potatoes are excellent sources of phosphorus and iron.

Also the potato is a fair source of vitamin C. Weight for weight it has a fourth as much vitamin C as do oranges and lemons. And you know these two citrus fruits are very rich sources of vitamin C. Potatoes have half as much vitamin C as tomatoes have. So for people who can't afford to buy oranges or tomatoes, the humble spud is a godsend! Nutritionists consider that the potato more than any other one food has saved the masses of the American people from scurvy and other diseases caused by a lack of this essential vitamin. The potato has also some of vitamins A, B, and G.

Knowing that the potato is such a good source of phosphorus and iron and has these vitamins, you can see why nutritionists defend it. They say that an overweight person should cut out some other common foods before she does the potato. For instance oil dressings, pastries, sweets, and fried foods.

Scientists in the Bureau of Home Economics think so highly of the potato that they include it in every diet list they get up.

Have you happened to see the Bureau's new publication "Diets to Fit the Family Income?" It has diets worked out for people of 4 income levels. In the emergency diet for people of very low incomes, these scientists recommend 8 to 9 servings of potatoes apiece a week. That means 11 pounds of potatoes a week for a family of 4, and 19 pounds for a family of 7.

In diets for people who have plenty of money to spend for food, these home economists list 1 serving of potatoes apiece a day. Nine pounds a week for a family of 4 and 16 pounds a week for a family of 7. So these foods specialists are recommending almost as much potatoes for the well-to-do as for the poor families.

If each of us ate this one serving of potatoes a day, which we probably don't do now, we would be eating 155 pounds in a year! This is of economic interest right now particularly because we have with us today a potato surplus.

I have a notion that the reason some people aren't much interested in potatoes is that in so many homes and restaurants potatoes are badly prepared. You might get a pencil and jot down some potato cooking suggestions of our home economists.

Too many cooks don't realize that as a potato cools or steams it gets soggy, loses its nice mealy texture. One way to help prevent a baked potato getting soggy is to cut a cross in one side of it after it's done. Then take the baked potato up in a cloth and squeeze it enough to loosen up its innards a little and make it bulge up into that cross-cut gash on its side. For steamed or boiled potatoes you have to peel off the skin right away to prevent them getting soggy. With any cooked potatoes the more quickly they are served, the better they will taste.

And speaking of skins, if you want to conserve most of the potato's minerals and vitamins, leave the skins on. Even when left unpared there will be some waste if you throw away water you boil the potatoes in.

If you are boiling the potatoes, have the water boiling merrily away before you ever pop the potatoes in. And KEEP the water boiling rapidly. That also helps save minerals and vitamins. And it results in a better tasting product.

Now do you have your pencil and paper ready? As to potato recipes, there are the usual ways: fried, boiled, scalloped, baked, hash browned, and au gratin, of course. Then there is always potato salad. And most of you have a recipe for chocolate potato cake, potato muffins, and potato bread. Then there's Lyonnaise potatoes. For it you fry some chopped onions first, and then put in diced already cooked potatoes. Potato O'Brien is a popular potato dish - where you have diced green peppers or pimiento as well as onions and potatoes fried together.

If you like curried things, here's a dish you might try. Cook some chopped onion in a little fat until it is golden brown, add diced cooked potatoes. Mix some curry powder in a little cold water, and add this to your potatoes and onions. Pour it all into a serving dish, and sprinkle grated cheese over the top. Serve at once.

A good way of using up left-over potatoes, and other vegetables and meats, is to make a nest of the mashed potatoes in a baking dish, and then fill this nest with diced vegetables and meat in a white or meat-stock sauce. Then bake until it is browned a bit.

We've said that the potato isn't as fattening as people think, that it is of value in the diet for its minerals and vitamins, and that too many people don't cook potatoes properly. And we've given a few suggestions as to cooking technique and recipes. And that, my friends, is all we've time for today.

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